**Institution of the Revd Rob Jones**

**Holy Trinity, Rathmines**

**20 November 2017**

**Matthew 17: 1-13 / The Transfiguration**

**Sermon by the Revd Eoghan Heaslip**

**The Gospel reading for our time together this evening is fascinating.**

**It opens up by making an important connection for us.**

‘Six days later’ – it reads.

It’s a bit like a rear view mirror in a car. Right there in the centre of the windscreen, sits the possibility of looking back as we move forward.

And that’s what happening here.

We’re being encouraged, to keep an eye on where we’ve just been, as in chapter 16, as we move forward into all that chapter 17 holds in store.

The two are connected.

**But in what way, are they connected?**

Well - what I believe Matthew wants us to take with us into this *Transfiguration* account, is **Peter’s Declaration about Jesus.**

Chapter 16, verse 16:

“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Matthew has us exactly where he wants us…..

The reality that not only illuminates, but transforms the whole landscape of chapter 17, is the ‘**primacy and centrality of Jesus’**.

This is what Matthew wants us to sit up and take notice of.

**This is what is of ultimate significance.**

These vivid colours of Jesus’ **primacy and centrality**, speak right to the heart of two aspects of the text in particular and I want to highlight them to you Rob & Dilys, as you take this exciting and courageous step as a family.

1. **The first is this, ‘only build what God asks you to build’.**

I don’t know about you, but for me, there’s always been something comical about Peter’s frantic response to what they witnessed on the mountain that day.

Confused maybe by where following Jesus had led them. Or unsure of how to make sense of what was happening.

His actions speak of, someone who is either desperately trying to validate his presence by contributing in some way. Or as some scholars suggest, that he was attempting to prolong, or even institutionalize the encounter.

But regardless of how we interpret this piece of the text, what’s clear is that Peter was missing the point in some kind of way.

In echoing the words, we heard first on the banks of the Jordan back in chapter 3 of Matthews Gospel, The voice of the Father, gives us insight into what that was missing ingredient was.

We’re being invited to listen.

But it’s not a call to listen, in a ‘Table quiz’ kind of way.

For fear of missing a prompt of cue and getting things the wrong way round.

It’s the call to listen repeatedly, in relationship, so **we** can have the very same Joy of knowing him.

**And that’s my prayer for you both tonight.**

That this new and exciting season of your life & ministry, is marked by an increased capacity to know and ‘**hear’** him.

And with that, that you know deep in your hearts:

1. That you don’t have to work to validate who you are or to prove yourself in any kind of way, by what you do.
2. And that you have the courage to resist building anything that you haven’t been asked to build.

**It’s God that builds the church.**

The parish of ‘Holy Trinity Rathmines & Harolds Cross’ is His, he has a plan for it, a plan for you both, and a purpose for your shared life together as a community.

A new chapter – where**,** you build on your history together, in step with JESUS, in the power of the spirit.

***SO MOVING ON***

2. **The second thing that really stood to me out as I prepared, which is ‘Jesus’ invitation to the disciples to live beyond fear’.**

Fear is a funny thing, we all experience it in one way or another.

It is a master of disguise.

Or as one author puts it, it is ‘the hidden stream that runs beneath all of the carefully constructed landscapes of our ‘**Instagram’ lives.**

For some of us, **fear presents as a pervasive low-level anxiety**.

A sinking feeling as we go back to work on a Monday morning,

or a gloom that settles over us as we think about the future.

For others, **fear is a task master that controls our every thought**, where endlessly we turn over concerns and prospects in our minds. Obsessing, planning, rehearsing, and working to secure our footing,

so that nothing ever goes wrong or trips us up.

For others of us, **fear manifests as a hidden thief, like a burglar** that keeps coming back, to break into our store house of joy.

The unexpected tragedy of a loved one getting ill, a business failing, or a relationship breaking up. Where, despite our very best efforts to build a happy and secure life, no lock or bolt ever seems strong enough to keep out this intruder, who keeps slipping back in to plunder our inner world.

And then there are those of us for whom, **fear is like an unpassable giant,** blocking the road to new choices and the path ahead.

Trapping us into a limited world where even applying for a new job becomes unthinkable, moving house seems too daunting, or proposing to your fiancé becomes an impossible risk.

**Whichever description rings most true for you tonight, the truth this text points us towards, is that Jesus invites us to live beyond fear.**

He comes to where we are and speaks in our lives, offering us a way out of the places we have become bound by fear.

**“Get up,” he says. “Don’t be afraid.”8**

Don’t live that way, that’s not what I want for you.

Don’t stay there, don’t get trapped into a limited world of thinking.

**‘And when they looked up’,** it says, **Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus.**

**That’s my prayer for you both tonight Rob &Dilys.**

That you keep on letting him in, and lifting your gaze.

That that there’s never a part of you that’s off limits to him.

That you continue to learn the value of ‘looking to him’ in all things.

And whatever the road ahead looks like:

1. That you have the ability to see where he is working for good.
2. That you don’t let fear come between you.
3. And with that, that you learn to let others in and to get help where you need it.

**Let me be the first to congratulate you officially, on what is a huge night for you personally, for this community, for our church family and for the Diocese too, I believe.**

**We love you, we believe in you, we’re behind you all the way.**

**We want nothing but the best for you.**

**LISTEN // ‘Only build what God asks you to build’**

*and*

**TRUST // ‘Choose to live beyond fear’.**

**Amen.**